

# parks, recreation, trails, and open space element

## INTRODUCTION

As a part of the natural fabric of Issaquah's community, parks and open spaces are a source of pride and identity. Parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces contribute to the physical and mental well-being of the community. They also provide natural beauty, environmental protection, recreational opportunities and balance to an urban landscape.

The Parks Element establishes policy direction for the continued provision of adequate park and recreation facilities to serve the community's existing and future needs, plus an evaluation of intergovernmental coordination opportunities to provide regional approaches for meeting park and recreational demand. This Park Element is to be used in conjunction with the *Parks Strategic Plan* which addresses the park system and its components, open space and recreational facilities, and capital improvement needs in order to secure grant funding for park improvements and/or land acquisition.

## PARKS, RECREATION, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE VISION

Issaquah's parks, recreation, trails and open space vision is to continue to provide high quality, safe and accessible recreational facilities; link City property and park areas with greenbelt, greenway or parkway connections; and preserve the community's natural resources, such as the creeks and forested hillsides. As Issaquah's community grows, the park, recreation, trails and open space system also shall grow providing appropriate recreational opportunities (both active and passive). Issaquah is a beautiful city, full of well-maintained park and natural open space areas that provide a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities for citizens and visitors.

## STATE REQUIREMENTS

### growth management act (gma) requirements

The City of Issaquah has always recognized the importance of planning for parks and recreation since the City adopted its first Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Element in 1995, before this element was required by the State. A Parks and Recreation Element is no longer a required element because the state did not provide funding to assist in developing local elements when this provision was added to the GMA, RCW 36.70A.070(9). However, park, recreation, and open space planning are GMA goals, and it is important to plan for and fund these facilities when possible through a park and recreation element that implements, and is consistent with, the capital facilities plan element as it relates to park and recreation facilities and includes: (a) Estimates of park and recreation demand for at least a ten-year period; (b) an evaluation of facilities and service needs; and (c) an evaluation of intergovernmental coordination opportunities to provide regional approaches for meeting park and recreational demand (RCW 36.70A.070 (8)).

## recreation and conservation office requirements

In addition to GMA requirements, the State of Washington Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) has requirements for local jurisdictions to examine their levels of service so local agencies may qualify for grant funding. RCO recommends, utilizing the level of service determination in evaluating park and recreational systems, including both the strengths and areas for improvement of the park and recreational system. RCO grant programs fall into the following categories: Boating facilities Program (BFP); Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF); Non-highway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA); and Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP).

## GROWTH with VISION and PURPOSE

Issaquah is nestled in the heart of a beautiful and natural environment. Built on the valley floor, the City of Issaquah and its downtown core straddle several creeks (Issaquah Creek, the East Fork of Issaquah Creek, and Tibbetts Creek) which are critical waterways for salmon reproduction. The City has slowly migrated into the wooded hillsides of the Valley only to be bound from further expansion due to Native Growth Protection Areas.

The City of Issaquah has coined the term “Green Necklace” as part of its vision for the City. The Green Necklace designates a public vision of major connective and experiential opportunities that residents want preserved and enhanced as Central Issaquah redevelops. The Green Necklace vision seeks to:

- a. Define a public system that supports Central Issaquah redevelopment
- b. Serve and support broader Issaquah; and
- c. Connect Central Issaquah and the other subareas of Issaquah with the Issaquah Alps, Lake Sammamish State Park, and other surrounding public lands.

The Central Issaquah Plan’s Guiding Principles emphasize the importance of the environment as well as Issaquah’s parks, recreation, trails and open space. The City will serve as the steward for each component of Issaquah’s park, recreation, trails and open space system which is envisioned to perform a variety of functions:

- a. Provide parks for active recreation, relaxation and that serve as community gathering places;
- b. Provide open spaces, forested hillsides and environmentally sensitive areas for visual relief and to protect the community’s ecological resources;
- c. Provide trails, riparian corridors and greenways/greenbelts to link areas of open space and wildlife habitat, and to provide connections between residential areas and other parts of the City;
- d. Create a sense of space through landscaping and street trees throughout the City;
- e. Provide recreational programming and classes for sports and activities;
- f. Provide building maintenance of the City’s owned parks, parks and recreation facilities, buildings and properties;
- g. Act as steward of all City owned parks and recreational land (native or developed), facilities and programming.

## GOALS AND POLICIES

The goals and policies listed herein effectively guide and support of the vision for Issaquah's park system. The public feedback received throughout the parks strategic planning process directly informs updates to goals and policies to ensure policy support of the big-picture vision for the park system.

### parks for today and future generations

**P Goal A. Build on the legacy of Issaquah's existing parks, trails, recreation, and open space system for the Issaquah community today and for future generations.**

#### discussion

Development of acquired and currently undeveloped park lands for recreational opportunities should be a top priority. To meet recreational demand for park facilities, the City will need to acquire and develop sites for recreational and sports programs, as well as to provide smaller, neighborhood sites with limited recreational facilities for specific neighborhoods. These sites should be accessible, safe, visible, and efficient to maintain. While reviewing new development options, the City should also be aware of the need to renovate, repair and upgrade existing parks and recreational facilities.

In addition to the use of park impact fees, the City may acquire land to enhance recreational opportunities and in support of the "Green Necklace" vision. Land may be utilized for future parks, trails, trail connections and natural open space. Providing access to park, recreational, trails and open space is deemed as a quality-of-life component to living in Issaquah.

Partnerships with developers can be achieved either through Development Agreements or through the development review process. Parks and recreational facility level of service is based upon the expected build-out or population of the development (as provided in the most recent Rate Study for Parks, Open Space and Recreation Facilities Impact Fees). This review process includes implementation of the Parks Impact Fees or allows for the construction of parks and park facilities, dedicated to the City that will offset the number of facilities identified in the review process. On occasion, the developer may both pay a share of the established park impact fees and construct recreational facilities. Developers may provide public spaces, plazas, trails and other pedestrian connections that link with the City's trail system, through the design of business and/or commercial areas. These public spaces and linkages function as a key part of the City's park system, as seen in the urban developed areas, including Central Issaquah, Issaquah Highlands, and Talus.

The 20-year Parks Strategic Plan identifies 51 capital projects and four operational projects prioritized into near-term, mid-term and long-term projects.

The Central Issaquah Plan establishes the urban mixed-use core to accommodate the majority of housing units and jobs for Issaquah's State mandated targets. The Plan identifies a vision for the "Green Necklace" to string together public green spaces comprised of community and neighborhood parks, with riparian corridors and tree lined streets, with active and passive plazas and other shared urban spaces. This urban growth will create unique interface between a built mixed-use environment, recreational opportunities and natural resources.

## EXPAND & ENHANCE

**P Policy A1** Anticipate growth and opportunities by completing and connecting the park system through enhancement, diversification, acquisition and expansion of Issaquah's parks, trails, recreation and open space as identified in the adopted Parks Strategic Plan.

**P Policy A2** Re-invest in our current parks, trails and public spaces to improve and enhance system performance via financial investment, renovation, revisioning and maintenance while adhering to all property, deed and natural restrictions.

**P Policy A3** Respond to recreation needs and trends by further activating park spaces with additional opportunities and amenities.

## ACQUISITION

**P Policy A4** Acquire suitable park, trail, open space and natural resource lands (when available) to enhance the park and recreation system. Acquisition criteria include:

- a. Supports the Issaquah Park System Vision.
- b. Responds to growth or maximizes the function of existing park property and facilities.

Examples of maximizing existing facilities include:

1. Connects to an identified trail or recreational corridor.
2. Expands an existing park that improves overall property management.
3. Advances a planned open space network.

- c. Acquired service or facility identifies the City as the best provider.
- d. Improves the equity of parks and recreation services to underserved areas or populations.
- e. Provides a cost benefit, recognizing parks as a public good.
- f. Open space land may or may not be required to be protected through deed or grant restrictions.
- g. Partnership opportunity to the potential acquisition.
- h. Availability or dedication of supportive maintenance and operating funds.

**P Policy A5** Identify potential park expansion opportunities when annexing areas and subareas.

## ATHLETIC FIELD CAPACITY

**P Policy A6** Maximize athletic field capacity by identifying opportunities within our parks, and meet athletic needs, by partnering with the Issaquah School District (ISD), Washington State Parks (Lake Sammamish State Park) and other organizations.

## balanced parks system

**P Goal B. Provide a balanced park system by blending active and passive experiences and providing equitable opportunities for the diverse needs/interests of Issaquah residents.**

## BALANCED

**P Policy B1** Strive to balance passive and active recreational opportunities within developed parks and natural environments as the City grows and user needs change.

**P Policy B2** Provide multi-use active recreational opportunities within park facilities where appropriate and consistent with the intended use of each particular park facility.

**P Policy B3** Meet the community's diverse needs and encourage healthy living while administering in a quality, caring and efficient manner to:

- a. Grow, diversify and expand the wide variety of recreational programs, services and classes.
- b. Foster the development of recreational scholarship programs which encourage healthy living and active recreation for Issaquah's underserved, aged and special needs populations.

#### ACCESSIBLE

**P Policy B4** Provide universal access to the park system and park programming to serve all ages and abilities within acceptable and appropriate context. Retrofit facilities in accordance with long-term planning goals and recreational standards.

**P Policy B5** Provide a wide variety of recreational and park experiences year-round for maximum benefit and enjoyment.

#### connectivity

**P Goal C. Connect parks, neighborhoods, business districts, schools and other activity areas together through an integrated system of trails and open spaces.**

#### SYSTEM CONNECTIONS

**P Policy C1** Promote connectivity of natural and built environments. Connectivity promotes the health, sustainability, interaction, wayfinding and mobility of the natural environment (wildlife and habitat).

**P Policy C2** Connect Issaquah's city park system to the public lands and outdoor recreation opportunities that surrounds the community.

**P Policy C3** Work locally and with regional partners to complete a connected trail system that will offer walkability to parks and trails within the city, as well as connections to the regional trail system that surrounds Issaquah, providing a valley to mountains connection.

**P Policy C4** Improve trail access for Issaquah residents and visitors and prioritize incorporating Issaquah's current and future network of trails and trailheads into the city park system.

**P Policy C5** Locate Neighborhood and Community parks or trail connections to such parks within ½ mile of each residence. This service area is encouraged to be free of any major road or other physical barriers.

**P Policy C6** Provide secondary connections to further connect neighborhood and development to the City's primary trail system as defined through the Parks

Strategic Plan and the Green Necklace. Such connections include: off right-of-way trails, connector trails and spur trails.

#### CREEK CORRIDOR

**P Policy C7** Provide a compelling north-south off-road valley trail network, connecting people to quality public park spaces along a vibrant corridor that extends along Issaquah Creek, from Squak Valley Park to Lake Sammamish State Park which also includes the Rainier Trail. The Creek Corridor interacts with and supports many city districts, neighborhoods, businesses and properties providing the community essential social, environmental and economic benefits. The Creek Corridor will serve as the primary feature of Issaquah's Parks System.

#### GREEN NECKLACE

**P Policy C8** Implement the Green Necklace through Central Issaquah by providing activated non-motorized connections (on and off right-of-way), parks, plazas and land to provide connection and experience opportunities in a collaborative planning effort.

**P Policy C9** Ensure Green Necklace connections provide access to the public lands that surround Issaquah (Cougar, Squak and Tiger Mountains, etc.).

#### MOUNTAINS TO SOUND

**P Policy C10** Provide an east/west Mountains to Sound trail corridor connecting the Green Necklace, the Creek Corridor and the Rainier Trail Corridor through the City and beyond.

### planning & design considerations

**P Goal D. Master plan major parks, trails, open space and facilities and engage the community in designing them.**

#### PLANNING

**P Policy D1** Ensure that parks are designed utilizing a thoughtful planning process that includes community engagement, creates a sense of place and integrates landscape, art, buffers, waterways, corridors, trails, parks, courtyards and plazas.

**P Policy D2** Preserve and orient park development, facilities and activities to enjoy scenic vistas and natural resources.

**P Policy D3** Recreational facilities are to be consistent with and enhance the park's environment, balancing development and protection of natural habitat and resources. Design, develop, construct, maintain and operate facilities to minimize impacts to, and improve the quality of, the environment, community and economy.

## AMENITIES

- P Policy D4** Amenities designed to serve the local neighborhood may be located at either Neighborhood Parks or Community Parks, such as play fields, play grounds and sport courts. These may or may not have a restroom depending upon location.
- P Policy D5** Amenities expected to draw users from multiple neighborhoods or communitywide, should be located at Community Parks, which are larger in scale and have more supporting facilities such as parking and restrooms. Examples include community gathering spaces, spray parks, tournament sports and others.
- P Policy D6** Assets and amenities to be added to natural open space, resource parks, or urban trails allow active and passive enjoyment consistent with environmental conditions and design policies.
- P Policy D7** Proposed amenities not already identified in the Park Strategic Plan, Comprehensive Plan Capital Facilities Element, annual Capital Improvement Program, or individual park master plans should be evaluated for addition to the park system. When siting park and recreation assets and amenities, guiding principles and considerations include whether the amenity is:
- Consistent with the Park Strategic Plan Vision.
  - Identified to address community needs or gaps in the system.
  - Consistent with the park classification.
  - Viable based on the site plan and stewardship plan.
  - Compatible with existing park uses.
  - Usable in multiple seasons.
  - Within projected funding resources of the City, is grant eligible, presents a partnership opportunity, or is a viable entrepreneurial opportunity.
  - Feasible to maintain over the long-term with available or projected resources.
- P Policy D8** Monitor potential amenity improvements for parks, trails and open spaces for an enhanced user experience and better functionality.

## PLACEMAKING

- P Policy D9** Apply "placemaking" principles as parks are redesigned or added to ensure parks and public spaces are accessible, activities engage people, the space is comfortable and spaces are provided for social gathering.
- P Policy D10** Create a sense of place along main access corridors and/or boulevards (streets and thoroughfares) by utilizing unifying design features such as plantings, site furniture and wayfinding cues.

## PLAY

- P Policy D11** Design natural and creative play elements for a variety of ages for fine and gross motor skills with free and/or structured play elements.



#### SIGNAGE

**P Policy D12** Incorporate the use of signage to direct, inform and educate all park and recreational users. In addition, signage and wayfinding shall link multi-modal transportation users to major public destinations and facilities that include cultural amenities, parks, trails, corridors, gateways, transit stops/stations and parking.

**P Policy D13** Signage shall be strategically located to ensure it is seen by users as a wayfinding method while preserving the visual integrity and natural character of all parks, recreational area, trails and open spaces and facilities.

**P Policy D14** Signage shall be consistent with park and/or city-wide branding and wayfinding plans.

#### TRAIL DESIGN

**P Policy D15** Trails within the Creek Corridor and Mountains to Sound Trail corridor shall have a standard minimum trail width of 12 feet unless other restrictions/constraints exist. Variations shall be approved by the Parks and Recreation Department. Trail surfacing shall support universal access.

#### PLANTS & VEGETATION

**P Policy D16** Restoration, enhancement and stewardship projects within the City's designated open space and Native Growth Protection Areas, should plant species native to the State of Washington and appropriate for the project site's plant community.

**P Policy D17** Planting within the City's parks and streetscapes shall encourage the use of native and drought tolerant plant species as appropriate for the project site and as approved by City permitting and development. Plant material should be used to provide visual interest, create atmosphere and enhance the sense of place.

### environmental preservation

**P Goal G. Preserve, enhance and protect a coordinated system of parks and public open spaces to preserve the city's natural character, sustain its urban forest resources and enhance its natural systems, wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors as a legacy for future generations.**

#### PRESERVE & PROTECT

**P Policy E1** Preserve and protect the natural integrity of the environment as well as resources and artifacts of significance to the City's cultural heritage.

**P Policy E2** Manage and implement environmental programs, stewardship plans, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) or Maintenance and Operation Manuals to preserve and protect the City's natural open space and wildlife resources.



#### BALANCE

- P Policy E3** Balance multi-use recreational opportunities, recreational programming, arts and cultural experiences with preservation and protection of environmental quality, open space and wildlife habitat.

#### VISUAL QUALITY

- P Policy E4** Bring visual relief and tranquility to the urban environment to mitigate the impacts of development by including street trees, gardens, lawns, woods and water amenities throughout the park system.

- P Policy E5** Promote retention and replication of the area's natural mountain character, scenic beauty, sounds and ecology (plantings, water etc.) in the park system.

- P Policy E6** Preserve the quality of surrounding scenic and visual resources provided by the natural open space areas, such as the forested hillsides of the “Issaquah Alps.”

#### maintenance and stewardship

**P Goal F. Ensure system stewardship and sustainability through effective maintenance and resource management practices.**

#### MANAGEMENT

- P Policy F1** Effectively manage open space and natural resource lands in a manner that protects the environment while enhancing opportunities for people to experience and enjoy these lands.

- P Policy F2** Utilize best management practices in the management of Issaquah's parks and recreation system and adhere to operating documents that include the Integrated Pest Management Plan, Open Space Management Plan, standard operating procedures and best management practices.

- P Policy F3** Protect park lands through sustainable management practices and encourage wildlife and habitat species diversity.

#### STEWARDSHIP

- P Policy F4** Promote stewardship projects for areas located within and along Issaquah and Tilletts Creeks, including their tributaries, corridors and upland natural open space areas to preserve and protect the City's natural resources through the provision of resource management. Encourage cooperation with outside groups, agencies and volunteers.

- P Policy F5** Implement and uphold existing open space stewardship plans and create new plans for acquired property when needed.

#### SAFETY

- P Policy F6** Ensure Issaquah's parks and facilities are safe and well managed while providing all segments of the community with quality facilities and services.

**P Policy F7** Proactively address user security and safety in an effective and appropriate manner and minimize conflict potential for park facilities, open space and active recreation facilities. Ensure proper staffing levels and partner with police services in the prevention and management of safety issues through all park and recreational facilities.

**P Policy F8** Perform routine inspections of facilities and equipment and utilize maintenance and operations manuals to ensure public safety.

## partnerships

**P Goal G. Foster partnerships with local, regional, state and federal agencies to support Issaquah's park system. Embrace local partnerships with the public sector, non-profit organizations, businesses, private developers, various user groups and interdepartmental partnerships to provide and assist in the management and maintenance of a complex park system.**

### PUBLIC SECTOR

**P Policy G1** Partner with the Issaquah School District to improve and maintain safe and vibrant recreational facilities, fields and opportunities for school children and the park system.

**P Policy G2** Coordinate, cooperate and partner with local, state and federal agencies on a regional basis to provide an effective and efficient regional natural open space and park system, thus providing improved recreational opportunities, services and facilities for people living in the greater Issaquah area.

**P Policy G3** Participate in the cooperative regional planning efforts among agencies and jurisdictions in order to provide recreational opportunities and facilities on inter-jurisdictional public lands. Key agencies include but are not limited to; the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, Department of Ecology, King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks and the United States Forest Service.

- The City shall also work together with these agencies and jurisdictions to identify roles and responsibilities in contributing to regional needs and priorities.
- Identify, establish, protect and steward urban and rural open space corridors of regional significance.

### NON-PROFIT/BUSINESS

**P Policy G4** Encourage partnerships with neighborhoods and existing businesses to provide land or facilities for parks including, but not limited to: cost sharing for acquisition and development, furnishing materials or equipment, or providing maintenance or security.

**P Policy G5** Promote partnerships with non-profit, special-interest and service organizations. These groups provide increased expertise, interest, volunteers and/or funding for a facility or program provided by the Parks and Recreation Department.

- P Policy G6** Continue coordination and participation with valued specific interest groups including but not limited to: the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway Trust, Issaquah Alps Trail Club (IATC), Friends of the Issaquah Salmon Hatchery (FISH), Friends of Lake Sammamish State Park (FLSSP), other non-profit groups and local tribal communities.

#### PRIVATE DEVELOPER

- P Policy G7** Developers may be required to provide public spaces and facilities such as plazas, courtyards and pedestrian connections on-site through Land Use Code development requirements and/or incentives.
- When private development is required to provide a public space, such as urban plazas, parks and/or trails, they are to remain as part of the public realm, be accessible and function as if publicly owned.
  - Additional on-site project-level design requirements are also appropriate for larger subdivisions and multifamily developments.

- P Policy G8** Developers shall mitigate to offset impacts of their new development through payment of impact fees and/or providing park land, improvements and facilities. Impact fees are further defined in both State and City code.

#### INTERDEPARTMENTAL

- P Policy G9** Encourage interdepartmental planning, communication and information sharing to optimize the development and the experiences provided within Issaquah's park system.
- P Policy G10** Coordinate collective planning efforts to create a cohesive, balanced, encompassing, sustainable, educational, vibrant park and recreational inventory.
- Embrace the integration of design elements contained within City plans and code including but not limited to: the Central Issaquah Plan, Mobility Action Plan, Olde Town, Transportation Plan, Open Space Stewardship Management Plans, land use and public infrastructure based plans, visions and projects into the park system.
  - Integrate public art and cultural heritage into the park system for enhancement and educational purposes.

- P Policy G11** No change of use within a park shall occur without Parks coordination/assessment of impacts and any mitigation measures completed.

#### implementation

**P Goal H. Execute the vision and plans in accordance with the Parks Strategic Plan and measure the effectiveness and success of the Comprehensive Plan in achieving community visions, goals and policies.**

#### COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- P Policy H1** Ensure Comprehensive Plan goals and policies are accompanied by actions and resources, including but not limited to those listed in the Implementation

Strategy (Issaquah Comprehensive Plan, Appendix B, Ord 2741, effective date: 6/30/15).

#### PARKS STRATEGIC PLAN

**P Policy H2** Implement actionable projects identified in the Parks Strategic Plan and prioritize using the Parks Planning Tools. Each project shall conform to measurable metrics for success and support the vision for the Parks and Recreation System.

#### LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS)

**P Policy H3** Create and implement a performance-based level of service policy that is a companion to the investment per capita level of service. The performance-based level of service should address overall asset conditions, recreation value, availability and accessibility to the community.

#### FUNDING

**P Policy H4** Employ sound fiscal management of parks and recreation capital and operating funds. Develop guidelines and strategies to allocate funding across investment types such as: reinvestment in existing parks, trail and park system connectivity, and protecting open space networks.

**P Policy H5** Seek funding sources in the form of grants, park bonds, levies, partnerships and donations to enhance the City's park system and to supplement the City's contributions to the park system.

**P Policy H6** Use impact fees to address the impacts of development on the park system and fund improvements that serve the community at large.

#### ENGAGEMENT

**P Policy H7** Encourage citizen participation in the planning and development, operations, stewardship and maintenance of the City of Issaquah's park system. Embrace the volunteers who participate in stewardship activities, serve on committees and partner with outside agencies and special interest groups.

## FUTURE PARK and RECREATION NEEDS

Future year demand and needs are addressed in the Parks Strategic Plan, and Capital Facilities Element of the Issaquah Comprehensive Plan. These documents provide an inventory of current City owned properties, a location map, and a summary of the expected near, mid and long term demands, available resources and anticipated investments based on the adopted level of service (LOS) for parks, recreation and open spaces.

### level of service

To satisfy GMA requirements, the City of Issaquah measures its Level of Service (LOS). The LOS is defined as "the capital investment per person" and is calculated by multiplying the capacity of parks and recreational facilities time the average cost of those items. To determine and calculate a value for future parks and recreational facility needs as the City's population increases, "the capital investment per person" is multiplied by the City's future growth. New residential development is

required to satisfy the parks and recreation impact fee assessed per unit to offset the recreational needs associated with the development. This provides a flexible approach for the provision of parks and recreational facilities for city residents. Determination of the current LOS fulfills the GMA goal for estimates of demand for at least a twenty-year period as identified in the Capital Facilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan.